

CITY OF SUNNYVALE
PARKS DIVISION
730-7506

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

“SPARE THE AIR DAYS”

Unfortunately, air quality is generally at its worst during the summer months--the same time of year residents and visitors rely most heavily on the sports fields, picnic sites and play areas of our park system. Whenever the Air Quality District predicts that pollution levels will exceed the California ozone health standard, Parks Division staff minimize the use of hedge trimmers, backpack blowers, and other small equipment. Because support of "Spare The Air Days" is defined by non-use, our efforts aren't very visible or easily appreciated. What is visible to park neighbors and visitors is our continued use of larger gas-powered equipment, even during Spare The Air Days, in order to provide Council-approved service levels.

The logic behind our continued use of gas-powered equipment on "Spare The Air Days" may escape most homeowners who find it relatively easy to alter the days they care for landscapes--it doesn't take that long to mow a front yard for example, and there are several other days in the week with which to catch up. If every park and school site had its own staff, as well as its own landscape equipment, parks workers could also afford to shut down all equipment without any impact on service levels, or the public who rely on park staff.

However to operate efficiently, most parks staff are responsible for the maintenance of several sites, and share landscape equipment that is operated almost daily. On Mondays, for example, one large mower is used at six different park/school sites. That same mower is back in operation the next day, servicing a number of different sites, and each school schedules its outdoor activities around that maintenance schedule. If Monday's schedule is missed, there is often no way of catching up--those sites simply do not get mowed, the turf grass suffers damage and park/school visitors do not find adequate fields for their activities.

GETTING THE JOB DONE...

The bottom line is that when ball fields and school grounds aren't mowed on schedule, we fail to provide the levels of service approved by City Council--levels of service citizens and park visitors expect and deserve. Completely eliminating our use of equipment on "Spare The Air Days" would either mean spending a lot more to get the job done right (more equipment/more staff), or reducing our expectations and service levels.
